

**Pines Ground Water Contamination Site
Community Interviews Summary
May 13 and 20, 2013**

On May 13 and May 20, EPA interviewed 13 community members interested in the Pines site and below is a summary of the interviews.

1. **Do you live or work on or near the Site? If no, are you affiliated with any organization that has an interest in the site? [What organization]?**
 - 13 lived on or near the site
2. **How long have you been a resident in the area?**
 - Nine over 30 years, four about 25 years, one 15 years, one 7 years.
3. **How long have you been aware of environmental concerns at the site?**
 - 10 aware since about 2001-2004 when the issues started/when bottled water provided
 - 1 since about 2006 (when moved to area)
 - 1 not sure how long aware; wasn't aware until information in the news; had a swimming pool and couldn't keep the oily, dirty film on top of water off; would find black ash on side of pool
4. **What do you know about the Pines site?**
 - Know landfill filled with fly ash which was put on road beds; received bottled water and then was hooked up to municipal water
 - It is a coal ash dumping site; because of dumping, the wells were contaminated and there are health issues
 - There is testing being done for radioactivity; some people had their water changed (from well to municipal water); about 50 residents received \$25,000 for loss of home value
 - Relative was trucker who hauled bottom ash to site; he said stuff was brought in from steel mills and dumped in landfill and there is a sailboat in the landfill
 - Overall, the landfill is filled with fly ash that leached in to the ground water, which resulted in a Superfund investigation. Believes there is radioactive contamination in fly ash; he conducted surveys in 2009 and 2012
 - There is 1 million plus tons of fly ash at Yard 520; he is part of citizen action group that pushed/began campaign to get this site as part of Superfund and there is a problem with coal ash leaching
 - Four people said they know "everything" about the site since it started.
 - Fly ash was dumped on roads; area contaminated with fly ash

5. **What concerns do you have about the site?**

- Health concerns; husband is 68 and has dementia (not alzheimers); wonders if contamination cause of dementia; husband was iron worker in constructor who installed iron work, also did welding and worked in the mills
- Health concerns because she has health issues
- Property values are of concern; her property is not hooked up and she wants her well tested because if she tries to sell property, will she be able to?
- Why hasn't she gotten hooked to city water – will she?
- How did the feasibility study get done without the remedial investigation?
- The rest of the town should be hooked up to water. Furious and appalled that an option to connect the rest of the homes to municipal water was not included in the feasibility study. "Never imagined that would never be an option."
- Health and property value concerns; not connected to city water and still gets bottled water; concern about the safety of the water
- Concern about radioactive contamination in soil; has done sampling and surveys (in 2009 and 2012) and no one has come out to check work and he does not have money to get a laboratory analysis; believes his results show there is a problem; no one responded to his 2009 survey, finally EPA has responded to 2012 survey; concern that EPA is not overseeing work being done by PRP contractors – seems that PRPs have free reign; EPA loses objectivity when EPA lets PRP do all the work [sampling]; sent in FOIA request and does not think he got all the information; on his own found EPA web page of radionuclides information
- Are there still toxins in the pipes? Wanted to know how she can find out if her soil is bad – will it be tested? She read information from Sierra Club that air quality is bad here, that it is like smoking a pack of cigarettes a day; has health concerns – husband has bowlegs and never did before and her kids have panic disorders; also concerned about property values; heard there were radioactive readings done – what are the results? Are her concerns valid?
- Concerned EPA not doing its job; town council asked for input and information and was told to get it from the CAG; said the current CIP is not a functional document and would give it an "F"; believes role of EPA is to keep local officials informed and that has not happened; at the beginning of the process he was a great supporter of EPA but now thinks its worthless; was told Superfund Alternative was VERY different from Superfund process and should be quicker – but it is not true; was given Superfund 101 training, but did not cover Superfund Alternative process; will be sending letter to EPA officially requesting that PRP attorney and contractors be removed from site activities because they are ingrained in coal ash industry and have no objectivity at this site; Responsible parties representatives are bought and paid for by coal ash industry he has no confidence in the process; also wants to know who EPA contractor works for because they may also be working privately for the responsible party, said there is no transparency in the process.
- Concerned about radiation because she has two small children that play in the yard. Fly ash is a carcinogen and dangerous – does the fly ash contaminate the air quality? What about digging in the garden – does that disturb the fly ash?
- Is there arsenic contamination?
- Concerned about health issues; has had gardens for over 30 years and gives produce away to neighbors – is she poisoning neighbors?

- Property values is a concern – people say “oh, you live in a bad area” will she be able to sell her house if she wants to?
- Why were some businesses hooked up to municipal water and not homes?
- Why will the PRPs not give the rest of the town municipal water?
- Has the plume changed since many of the homes were put on municipal water?
- Concern that Pines has a stigma that it has bad water. Where does that leave people not connected? Not able to rent a house that is not connected.
- See this as an Environmental Justice issue. “Everyone has the right to have confidence that when they turn on water, they have safe water.”

6. **How do you normally get information about the site?**

- Newspaper (specify)** *News Dispatch (6); Northwest Indiana Times (2) (Five people said they do not get the newspaper and others are cancelling their subscription because it is too expensive)*
- Radio station(s) (specify)** none mentioned
- TV station(s) (specify)** none mentioned
- Internet** EPA website
- Other (specify)** (1) searches information for himself; (1) from neighbor

7. **How would you like to be informed concerning future site activities (mail, e-mail, telephone, newspapers, television, radio, social media such as Facebook)?** All those interviewed would like to get updates through the mail; seven people also like getting emails; five people said Facebook would be good; two people said through public meetings. One resident commented that she liked it when people came to the house and talked to her. The Town of Pines Council offered to put flyers out in the community. The best way to communicate is to knock on doors and hand out flyers. One person said the information should be posted at neighborhood Grocery Store because everybody goes there.

8. **Have you had any contact with local Pines, Pines Township, P.I.N.E.S. CAG, state or federal agencies about the site?** Some people has talked with town council members and EPA. Four residents have been involved with the P.I.N.E.S. CAG. Seven residents have not heard of the P.I.N.E.S. CAG or have talked with anyone else about the site.

9. **If EPA holds a public meeting or availability session, would you attend?** All replied yes.

- Do you normally attend the public meetings?** All would attend meetings
- What day and time would be most convenient for you?** Ten said evenings are the best times, no day preferences were given; one said late afternoon about 4 pm is best; one said it doesn't matter, if work schedule allowed, she would attend; one said daytime during the school year works best.
- If not, what obstacles keep you from attending?** Would not be able to attend if working .

- d. **Do you have suggestions about locations for future meetings?** All thought the Library is a good place. Other suggestions include: Church on County Road and Route 20, St. Ann's Church in Beverly Shores; maybe the Firehouse; and the Town Hall

10. **Do you feel that you have been adequately informed about the site?**

- Three residents said they had no opinion because he had not made the effort to find information so it was not fair to comment
- One resident said not really because water was tested but never got results
- One resident said she doesn't really know what is transpiring
- One resident said she is informed but doesn't believe half of what is told
- One said there has not been any updates in the last year or two
- Three people said they keep themselves informed
- Others either had no opinion or were not asked the question

11. **Site information is posted on the EPA's web site. Have you used the EPA web site?** Seven people have used the website; one said it was easy to navigate.

Information repositories exist at Michigan City Public Library. Have you ever used the information about the site held at one of these places? Three people have used the Information Repository; one reported that documents are missing; one reported that the librarians don't know where the information is.

12. **Are there any other people or groups you think we should talk to about the Pines site either because they have unique information or would like to know more from EPA?**

- Earth Justice – interested in coal ash
- Sierra Club
- Clean Air Task Force
- National Lakeshore Group
- No suggestions; this is a strange community – private and people on her stretch of the road don't seem concerned; many neighbors gave up when they found they were not getting city water.

13. **Do you hold any position – elected, appointed, hired – with any municipal state or federal agency?** 3 people held positions.

14. **Do you have any questions/comments?**

- Resident was not involved in class action and wondered if there would be another opportunity to get involved in one.
- Keeps the grand kids away from the area.
- Has city water now, but had dogs with tumors
- Concern about harmful chemicals in bottom ash because bottom ash never goes away; the industry responsible should buy them out.

- When was the last time the water was tested? Can the contamination get to my property?
- Is moving the landfill an option?
- Doesn't know what can be done and wonders if contamination is the cause of her husband's dementia.
- What are the specific health risks?
- Will bottled water continue to be provided?
- What about radiation concerns? Husband has cancer and doctor asked if there were environmental factors.
- Don't want to get alarmed by information from Sierra Club – would like to know the facts of the situation.
- What about property values – is there any recourse if I decide to sell my house?
- Who runs this show? EPA lets the coal ash industry have a free hand in running this process.
- At least last remedial project came out and met with the P.I.N.E.S group though he put a gag order on them and said they could not provide the community information on draft documents. Was told that experts would only have to do a spot check on documents prepared, but that is not true.
- The Superfund Alternative program is proposed to be more effective and provide cost savings, but that has not been studied and doesn't believe it to be true.
- Five of the residents interviewed expresses appreciation at the opportunity to talk with EPA one on one and thought it was a good process.
- What is the next step?
- How would someone get on municipal water?
- Need to have another public meeting to get a status update.
- This was supposed to take three years, now it has been 13 years.
- Remedial Project Manager use to be visible to the community and could always call him; no one is visible since he has left the site.
- Concern about responsible party contractors doing science on the site – there is a definite conflict of interest.
- What are the future plans for Yard 520 dump?
- What is the plan regarding radiation? How is it going to be addressed? Will it have to be written into the feasibility study?
- The Town of Pines is doing a comprehensive plan and it is imperative to account for future ordinances regarding water.
- Hope that all the death we have seen won't continue because of the contamination; need to make sure we don't make our children sick – health issues are the biggest concern.